



14.7 **DRAFT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY -
ENDORSEMENT OF DRAFT POLICY FOR CONSULTATION**

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report presents a draft Community Engagement Policy to Council and seeks endorsement to release the draft policy for consultation with our community prior to adopting the policy in line with requirements under section 55 of the *Local Government Act 2020*.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The new principles-based *Local Government Act 2020* (the Act) received Royal Assent on 24 March 2020 and is being proclaimed in four stages.
- 2.2 The Act introduces new requirements for Victorian councils, including a stronger focus on community engagement in our strategic planning.
- 2.3 Council is required under Section 55 of the Act to adopt a Community Engagement Policy by 1 March 2021.
- 2.4 A Community Engagement Policy adopted under the Act must:
- a) be developed in consultation with the municipal community
 - b) give effect to the community engagement principles
 - c) be capable of being applied to the making of the Council's local laws
 - d) be capable of being applied in relation to the Council's budget and policy development
 - e) describe the type and form of community engagement proposed, having regard to the significance and complexity of the matter and the level of resourcing required
 - f) specify a process for informing the municipal community of the outcome of the community engagement
 - g) include deliberative engagement practices which must include and address any matters prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this paragraph and be capable of being applied to the development of the Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan and Asset Plan
 - h) include any other matters prescribed by the regulations.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- 3.1 Endorses for community consultation the draft Community Engagement Policy required under section 55 of the *Local Government Act 2020* (Attachment 1) and invites



community feedback on the draft Community Engagement Policy until 23 December 2020.

- 3.2 Delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer to make amendments to the draft document to correct any minor errors that do not materially alter the intent of the draft policy.

4. KEY POINTS/ISSUES

- 4.1 The *Local Government Act 2020* introduces new requirements for Victorian councils, including a stronger focus on community engagement.
- 4.2 Key changes are:
- Councils must adopt and maintain a Community Engagement Policy
 - A Council must develop or review a Community Vision, Council Plan, Financial Plan, Asset Plan in accordance with its deliberative engagement practices
 - The Community Engagement Policy must be capable of being applied to the making of Council's local laws, Council's budget and policy development.
- 4.3 Section 56 of the *Local Government Act 2020* outlines five community engagement principles:
1. The community engagement process has a clearly defined objective and scope
 2. Participants in community engagement will have access to objective, relevant and timely information to inform their participation
 3. Participants in community engagement will be representative of the persons and groups affected by the matter.
 4. Participants in community engagement are entitled to reasonable support to enable meaningful and informed engagement.
 5. Participants in community engagement are informed of the ways in which the community engagement process will influence Council decision making.
- 4.4 The draft Community Engagement Policy gives effect to these community engagement principles and outlines Council's commitment to engaging with our community in strategic planning for our City's future.
- 4.5 It outlines how Council will facilitate genuine and transparent opportunities for the community to provide feedback and inform the decisions made by Council. Where the problem is complex and challenging, the policy addresses how Council will draw upon expertise and collective intelligence to find shared solutions and shared responsibility with the community.
- 4.6 The policy will act as a guide to community members to know what to expect in planning for community engagement and what role they can play in our decision making.
- 4.7 The policy seeks to deliver the following outcomes:
- ensure our community and stakeholders have the opportunity to provide their views and aspirations for our City, to inform the decision making of Council
 - provide genuine opportunities for the community to provide feedback that will assist Council to deliver public value through its projects, strategies and services



- build community and stakeholder trust and confidence in the Council, as the Council is aware of and actively considers the lived experience and feedback of the community as part of its decision-making process
- create opportunities for the community and stakeholders to build knowledge of Council activities to enhance their ability to engage with Council from an informed position
- raise awareness of the different ways our community and stakeholders can be involved in Council decision making, ranging from sharing information about a matter to coming together to co-create a solution
- ensure community engagement is as representative as possible by removing barriers to participation
- ensure an environment is created where diversity of view and thought is encouraged and safe to express, and that all participants, including Councillors and staff are treated respectfully
- ensure Council resources are applied effectively and efficiently.

4.8 In line with this policy, and to the best of its ability, Council promises to:

- seek out and encourage contributions from people, including those who may be affected by or interested in a decision
- provide clear, relevant, timely and balanced information for people to meaningfully contribute
- select a level and scale of engagement that appropriately reflects the issue at hand and opportunities for collaboration with our community
- explore new and emerging technologies that support greater, more interactive and engaging ways to contribute through different channels
- provide a variety of appropriate and accessible ways for people to have their say and speak honestly
- actively listen so that people's ideas and input assist in making the final decision
- consider the needs and interests of all people in the decision-making process, and actively remove barriers to engagement
- acknowledge and give appropriate consideration to input from those who may be more impacted than others by a decision
- conduct engagement activities in ways that make efficient and effective use of Council's available resources
- share the final decision, and how community input was considered making that decision.

4.9 While noting these promises, on some occasions, Council may agree to take a slightly different approach to engagement by trialling an initiative and seeking feedback through temporary use, initiatives or activations. Community feedback about what works and what doesn't through these temporary approaches will then be used to inform longer-term policy outcomes.

4.10 There may also be occasions where Council is not able to engage with the community; for example, where Council is legislatively required to take a particular course of action.

4.11 The Act does not define deliberative engagement; rather, the Act directs councils to demonstrate deliberative engagement practices, recognising that:

- the level and scale of deliberation and the appropriate deliberative engagement method should be determined by each council in line with other considerations



such as the scope or complexity of the topic, the level of knowledge or expertise required to engage meaningfully, the opportunity to co-design the solution with the community and the resources available to deliver the engagement

- while many councils (including Port Phillip) have undertaken various deliberative engagement practices in the past, it is a relatively new concept for some Victorian councils and requires some time for the practice to mature.

5. CONSULTATION AND STAKEHOLDERS

- 5.1 The Community Engagement Policy is a statutory document that gives effect to requirements of the *Local Government Act 2020* as they relate to community engagement.
- 5.2 Officers have worked closely with Local Government Victoria, sector bodies and other Victorian councils to interpret legislative requirements and develop the draft policy.
- 5.3 Community feedback from previous consultations has also informed development of the draft policy.

6. LEGAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Under the Act, Council is required to adopt a Community Engagement Policy by 1 March 2021.

7. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 7.1 Funding to support engagement activities will be considered as part of the Council's annual budget process.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 8.1 There is no direct environmental impact resulting from Council adopting a Community Engagement Policy.

9. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 9.1 The key objectives of the Policy as they relate to the community are to:
 - 9.1.1 facilitate genuine and transparent opportunities for the community to provide feedback to, co-design solutions with and inform the decisions made by Council
 - 9.1.2 help our community understand what role they can play in our decision making
 - 9.1.3 ensure all members of our community can have a say in planning for the City's future.

10. ALIGNMENT TO COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICY

- 10.1 Adoption of the Community Engagement Policy aligns with Direction 6 of the Council Plan (Our Commitment to You) by providing a transparent and good governance approach to support Council's decision making and contributing to a financially sustainable, high performing, well governed organisation that puts the community first.

11. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

- 11.1 TIMELINE



- 11.1.1 Subject to endorsement of its release for consultation, officers will undertake a community engagement process until 23 December 2020.
- 11.1.2 Feedback received will be presented to Council prior to considering adoption of a final Policy at an Ordinary Council meeting in February 2021.
- 11.1.3 The draft policy will be updated as part of this feedback and review process; this will include a review of the language in the policy to ensure it meets basic accessibility guidelines.

11.2 COMMUNICATION

- 11.2.1 Consultation on the draft policy will be promoted via Council's communications channels and on Council's Have Your Say online engagement portal, as well as via email / e-newsletter databases and through print / face-to-face channels where available and appropriate.
- 11.2.2 Feedback received through this consultation will be presented to Councillors as part of a Council Report in February 2021
- 11.2.3 Outcomes will be communicated via Have Your Say and through other communication channels as appropriate.

12. OFFICER DIRECT OR INDIRECT INTEREST

- 12.1 No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any direct or indirect interest in the matter.

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ATTACHMENTS Draft Community Engagement Policy November 2020